

Effect of Transformational Leadership on School Climate at Elementary Level

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Abstract:

Received: July 29, 2025 Review Process: August 14, 2025 Accepted: August 31 2025 Available Online: September 26, 2025	The ever-changing landscape of 21st-century characterized by numerous emerging global and digital trends, demands such school leaders who are adept in promoting conducive, adaptive and inclusive teaching-learning environment. From inspiring a shared vision to fostering teacher empowerment, student engagement, and emotional well-being, transformational leaders create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. The study explored the effect of transformational leadership on school climate at elementary level. The study implied descriptive quantitative survey design. The population comprised of all elementary school teachers of district Multan while sample size consisted of 246 teachers. A self-structured 32-item questionnaire was used. Researcher used descriptive and inferential statistical techniques for analysing the data by using SPSS. The results revealed that transformational leaders establish a positive and transformative educational experience that leaves a lasting impression on the lives of all those involved in the school community. It's recommended that schools' principals must enhance their transformational leadership skills. Keywords: Transformational Leadership; School Climate; Elementary Level
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Introduction

Effective leadership involves valuing the positive feelings of subordinates, preserving their self-esteem, and showing appreciation. In the field of education, transformational leadership practices have gained significant attention. Kilag et al. (2024) opined that transformational leadership offers a pivotal role in bringing about educational innovation in the schools. Transformational leaders inspire teachers and stakeholders to take active part in executing innovation initiatives in the school by creating a supportive learning climate. Transformational

leadership focuses on inspiring change and motivating team members to share a common vision and goals for educational institutions. Dwyer (2022) said that transformational leaders cultivate a culture of innovation and creativity within the school community. They encourage teachers and students to think outside the box, take risks, and embrace failure as a part of the learning process. Shahin, Rowan, Mazloun, and Kavar, (2024) were of the view that by promoting innovation and creativity, transformational leaders nurture a culture of continuous improvement and

address the challenges of the digital age and promote a healthy school climate.

Purwanto, Fahmi, and Sulaiman (2023) opined that transformational leadership imparts a significant impact on learning culture and also on organizational structure. Transformational leaders promote communication and capacity to take the risks in an environment that is psychologically safe. Consequently, these leaders are vital elements to encourage a school climate which supports innovation. Zacharatos, Barling, and Kelloway (2000) suggested that transformational leadership fosters the motivation and enthusiasm of subordinates by granting them the power to utilize their full potential. Such inspiring leaders promote team spirit and generate a sense of energy among their followers through idealized communication. Noori, Orfan, and Noori (2024) observed that transformational leaders prioritize creating a physically and emotionally safe school environment. They implement strategies to prevent bullying and promote a culture of respect and kindness. By establishing clear expectations for behavior and discipline, transformational leaders ensure that students and staff feel secure and supported within the school setting.

Fauzi, Martin and Ravesangar (2021) posited that transformational leaders regularly assess the school's progress towards achieving its goals and seek feedback from all stakeholders. They use data and feedback to make informed decisions and drive continuous improvement. By maintaining transparency and accountability in their leadership, transformational leaders ensure that the school remains focused on its vision and constantly evolves to meet the changing needs of its community. Transformational leaders celebrate and acknowledge not only academic achievements but also various forms of success within the school community. This culture of trust and transparency strengthens relationships, encourages collaboration, and contributes to a positive and harmonious school climate (Cousins, 2019).

Transformational leaders actively promote a culture of gratitude and positivity

within the school community. They encourage expressions of appreciation and recognize the efforts and accomplishments of students, teachers, and staff. By fostering an atmosphere of positivity, these leaders create a school climate where individuals feel valued, supported, and motivated to do their best (Montgomery, 2020).

According to Ahmad, Bakhsh and Rasool (2019), fostering collaboration and facilitating change are integral aspects of leadership. Therefore, it is crucial for principals to cultivate and apply leadership skills focused on bringing positive transformations to the educational system. Majority of schools' leaders in Pakistan exhibit an autocratic rather bureaucratic style of leadership. Most of the time, they are the key decision-maker authority (Ahmad & Dilshad, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The school climate, which encompasses the overall atmosphere, relationships, and learning environment within an educational institution, plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic performance, social-emotional development, and overall well-being. Transformational leadership, a leadership style characterized by vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has been widely recognized as a significant factor in influencing organizational outcomes and employee motivation in various settings, including educational institutions. But in Pakistan, the leadership style of majority of the school leaders is autocratic, mostly bureaucratic being the main decision-maker authority. Moreover, the school principals and head teachers have to follow the directions of their respective directors. Consequently, they have very limited freedom to adopt transformative leadership approaches for the school improvement. It has been an accepted fact that principals'/head teachers' leadership style has dominant impact on teachers' performance. This study seeks to explore teachers' perception regarding the effect of transformational leadership on school climate at elementary level.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore teachers' perception regarding the effect of transformational leadership on school climate at elementary level.
2. To examine the relationship between transformational leadership and school climate in elementary schools.

Literature Review

The understanding of leadership has evolved over time, particularly within the realm of school administration, due to shifts in the educational landscape characterized by accountability and school restructuring. According to Mascal (2007), the process of school improvement necessitates a leader who can facilitate a fresh perspective, encourage risk-taking and exploration of unconventional approaches, and provide support during this transformative period for both teachers and students. In Gardner's (1993) view, leadership involves the art of convincing leaders in schools use various leadership styles to guide individuals towards a common direction, motivating and influencing both students and teachers, aiming for positive transformation within educational institutions.

In this connection, Hoy & Miskel (2013) claimed that transformational leaders motivate their followers to attain remarkable results, displaying charisma, providing motivational support, stimulating intellectual growth, and demonstrating individual consideration. These actions foster personal and organizational development, as transformational leaders focus on intrinsic motivation, shared values, and goals. Consequently, this approach creates a work environment that is more engaging, fulfilling, and leads to enhanced performance and results. This leadership style has the power to transform individuals by tapping into their intrinsic motivation. By appealing to their values and long-term goals, a transformational leader can bring about significant changes. Allen (2015) even described transformational leadership as the foundation for surpassing previously held expectations for individuals and organizations. Moreover, within the

transformational leadership model, the development of individual leadership skills plays a vital role in enhancing organizational performance. By employing transformational leadership, systematic change can be facilitated, and teachers can be empowered to improve. Transformational leadership is characterized by the engagement of individuals within an organization, both individually and collectively, with the aim of increasing motivation and morale. Effective leaders proactively raise awareness among their followers about shared interests, motivating them to achieve outstanding results (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011).

According to Ball and Rundquist (1993), transformational leadership is a comprehensive concept consisting of four key factors: Charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention. They further assert that the construct of charisma can be examined more comprehensively through two dimensions: Simplified qualities (SQ) and preferred actions (PA). In the context of transformational leadership, a leader who possesses charisma, as demonstrated by their idealized attributes, captivates and influences others through their personal qualities and characteristics. These attributes engender trust, admiration, and respect among followers. On the other hand, idealized behaviors encompass the actions and behaviors exhibited by the leader that align with the shared vision and values, being an example for their followers. Transformational leadership theory posits that a transformational leader plays a crucial role in inspiring stakeholders, building effective teams, and establishing high-performance expectations.

Furthermore, transformational leadership involved inspiring motivation, whereby a leader communicates a compelling vision and motivates individuals to strive towards its achievement (Hernandez & Seem, 2004). By skillfully communicating and inspiring, the leader instills purpose and excitement in stakeholders, motivating them to exceed expectations and attain exceptional results. Intellectual stimulation is also a key

component of transformational leadership. Leaders who stimulate intellectual growth within their teams encourage individuals to think critically, challenge assumptions, and explore innovative ideas. By promoting a climate of curiosity and creativity, the leader empowers their followers to generate new perspectives and approaches, ultimately driving organizational growth and development (Barnett, McCormick & Conners 2000).

Lastly, individual consideration plays a pivotal role in transformational leadership, as leaders genuinely care for and support their followers' individual needs and aspirations. This involves recognizing and valuing the unique strengths, interests, and goals of each team member, and providing personalized attention, coaching, and mentorship. By fostering a supportive and nurturing environment, the leader enables individuals to thrive and reach their full potential. In summary, transformational leadership theory highlights the significance of a leader who inspires stakeholders, builds cohesive teams, and establishes high-performance expectations. By showcasing charismatic qualities, inspiring motivation, fostering intellectual development, and showing personalized care, transformational leaders create an environment that cultivates personal and organizational success. (Barrett & Sexton, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Burns (1978) introduced Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that transformational leaders deeply engage individuals within the organization, motivating them to higher performance levels. The notion of transformational leadership as perceived by Burns (1978), focused on a leader's capacity to actively engage individuals within an organization and drive them towards higher levels of motivation. The influence of transformational leaders extends to inspiring stakeholders, fostering unity among teams, and establishing ambitious performance standards. Expanding on this concept, Bass and Avolio (1994) advanced the transformational leadership theory by pinpointing its four

crucial elements: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. In addition, Stewart (2006) proposed an extensive examination of leadership styles, highlighting the subdivision of charisma into two distinct aspects: idealized attributes and idealized behaviors. Consequently, transformational leaders inspire stakeholders, form effective teams, and establish high-performance expectations.

Bass Leadership Model

Bass (1985) introduced a seven-factor model of transformational leadership, which included charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire leadership. Later, in collaboration with Avolio and Bass (1993), it was observed that charisma and inspiration, while theoretically distinct, often couldn't be empirically differentiated. This led to a reduction in the original model to six factors. Subsequent analyses, reviews, and critiques of Bass's transactional and transformational leadership model from 1985 and 1988 prompted suggestions to modify its components. Some authors couldn't replicate the original six-factor model confirmed by Hunt (1991). Consequently, these authors recommended consolidating certain leadership factors into higher-order factors, such as transformational leadership.

Skills of Transformational Leaders

Bass and Riggio (2006) outlined four key skills exhibited by these leaders, as follows. The first skill, known as Idealized Influence, refers to a leader who is respected, valued, trusted, and followed. Such a leader possesses specific personality traits and maintains a well-established rapport, making people pay close attention to their ideas. The positive behavior and pleasant demeanor of the school principal compel teachers to comply with their directives. It is crucial for the principal to guide and supervise their subordinates in a manner that is highly regarded by parents and the general public. Transformational leaders consistently prioritize institutional goals over their own needs. They serve as role models by successfully bringing about positive changes in

the system and effectively exerting their influence. These leaders possess inherent qualities that are rarely observed among the general populace (Northouse, 2007). The second aspect, referred to as Inspirational Motivation, involves elevating subordinates' competence in their work and instilling in them a sense of optimism about what can be achieved (Zacharatos et al., 2018). These individuals inherit certain genetic traits and characteristics from their parents, which contribute to their idealized influence. Additionally, these leaders possess attractive appearances and warm-hearted sentiments. Subordinates are presented with challenges and encouraged to pursue shared goals while actively participating in group activities. In order for the school principal to effectively lead both subordinates and students, it is imperative that they possess the necessary skills and qualities.

Asad, Rind and Abdulmuhsin (2022) claimed that there exists a reasonable positive relationship amid transformational leadership behaviour and the school culture. Further, Nusair, Ababneh and Bae (2017) suggested that transformational leadership fosters the motivation and enthusiasm of subordinates by granting them the power to utilize their full potential. Such inspiring leaders promote team spirit and generate a sense of energy among their followers through idealized communication. This aspect shares similarities with Reynolds et al.'s (2006) concept of a "learning environment" as well as "consensus and cooperative planning". In the present study, the fourth condition explored was "structure and organization", Abbas, Ekowati, and Suhariadi (2022) asserted that leadership is closely tied to the quality of relationships within the school community and with external stakeholders, emphasizing the interconnectedness of organizational roles, as they collectively form the organizational system.

Transformational Leadership's Impact on School Climate

Hoy and Miskel (1987) introduced a framework for evaluating the atmosphere of schools, classifying it into two overarching

classifications and five distinct aspects. The two main categories in which school climate can be categorized are the conduct of principals and the conduct of teachers. The five dimensions encompassed within these categories include: (a) supportive behavior exhibited by principals, (b) directive behavior displayed by principals, (c) engaged behavior demonstrated by teachers, (d) frustrated behavior exhibited by teachers, and (e) intimate behavior exhibited by teachers. Educators face an ongoing demand to pursue change in order to enhance schools. Achieving this goal involves embracing transformational leadership and enhancing the school environment involves transformational leadership, which Yoo, Jeong, Song, and Bae (2021) pointed out transformational leaders actively promote innovation and creativity within the school community. They create an atmosphere where new ideas are welcomed and encouraged, and where teachers and students feel empowered to explore novel approaches to learning. By fostering a culture of experimentation and risk-taking, transformational leaders stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This emphasis on innovation leads to the development of creative and forward-thinking individuals who can adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Takeuchi, Wang, and Farh (2020) claimed that in a constantly evolving educational landscape, transformational leaders exhibit resilience and adaptability. They are adept at navigating change and guiding their team through challenges. These leaders maintain a sense of stability and reassurance during times of transition, demonstrating a positive attitude and a willingness to embrace new opportunities. By modeling resilience, they empower teachers and students to face uncertainty with confidence and flexibility, contributing to a more resilient and adaptable school climate. Similarly, Weingarth (2023) conducted a study on school climate, revealing that open climates with supportive principals encourage teacher collaboration and a strong social support system, ultimately leading to more engaged educators. These results

underscore the importance of shared decision-making, exemplary leadership, and peer learning within a supportive school community for success. In contrast, closed school climates are marked by insincere relationships, low teacher morale, and limited trust among stakeholders and the principal (Uline, & Tschannen-Moran, 2008).

Further, Keno (2020) stated that transformational leaders empower students to have a voice in school decision-making processes. They involve students in matters that affect them, such as curriculum development, school policies, and student-led initiatives. By cultivating student agency, these leaders create a sense of ownership and responsibility among students, fostering a positive and participatory school climate. Transformational leaders promote interdisciplinary learning, encouraging teachers to collaborate across subjects and integrate different areas of knowledge. By breaking down traditional subject silos, students gain a deeper understanding of how different subjects relate to each other and

their real-world applications. This approach fosters critical thinking and creativity, contributing to a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive quantitative research design, and relied on survey methodology. The population comprised elementary school teachers of district Multan. Sample of the present study comprised of 406 elementary school teachers which were randomly selected. After reviewing the related literature in detail, a survey questionnaire was constructed having reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha as 0.83. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed by using the SPSS software. Descriptive analysis, inferential analysis and correlation analysis were run to draw the results.

Findings

This section presents correlational analysis and inferential analyses. The analysis employed the Pearson product correlation coefficient formula using SPSS.

Table 1

Relationship between Headmaster/Headmistress's Transformational Leadership and School Climate

Variable	TL	PL	LS	LE	UE	SC
Transformational Leadership (TL)	1	.730**	.925**	.310**	.277**	-.092
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.093
Perception of Transformational Leadership (PL)	.730**	1	.416**	.178**	.024	-.182**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.001	.664	.001
Self Leadership Practice (LS)	.925**	.416**	1	.314**	.355**	-.021
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.702
Leadership Effect (LE)	.310**	.178**	.314**	1	.708**	.583**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000		.000	.000
Utilization of emotions (UE)	.277**	.024	.355**	.708**	1	.533**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.664	.000	.000		.000
School Climate (SC)	-.092	-.182**	-.021	.583**	.533**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.093	.001	.702	.000	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents the inter-correlations among participants' overall perception of Transformational Leadership, its four subscales, and its impact on School Climate. The majority of signature 2-tailed values were found to be significant at a 0.01 accuracy level. Additionally, in most cases (3 out of 5), the *r*-values indicated a moderately positive relationship between Transformational Leadership and its effect on School Climate. This suggests a proportional relationship between these variables, implying that an enhancement in the

Table 2

Difference between Male and Female Public Elementary School Teachers' Opinions

Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Gender	Male	97	176.87	19.18	399	1.38	.16
	Female	149	179.65	20.20			

In Table 2, the viewpoints of male and female elementary school teachers were compared. Female teachers have a slightly higher mean score (179.65) compared to male

Table 3

Difference between Public Elementary School Teachers' Opinions by Teaching Area/Subject

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1886.60	4	471.65	1.22	.29
Within Groups	151971.67	396	383.76		
Total	153858.27	400			

Table 3 suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the opinions of elementary school teachers across teaching areas, as the calculated significance

Table 4

Difference between Public Elementary School Teachers' Opinions by Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5674.91	3	1891.63	5.06	.00
Within Groups	148183.36	397	373.25		
Total	153858.27	400			

headmaster/headmistress's Transformational Leadership leads to improvements in the School Climate.

Analysis of Difference among Teachers' Opinions

In this section, analyze data were analyzed to identify variations in opinions among public elementary school teachers based on gender, teaching area, experience, age, academic qualifications, and professional qualifications, using one-way ANOVA and independent sample *t*-tests.

teachers (176.65). However, the significance value (0.16) surpasses the critical level of 0.05, suggesting no statistically significant difference in teacher opinions.

value (.29) exceeds the tabulated level of 0.05. This conclusion is further supported by the *F* value (1.22).



In Table 4, a statistically significant difference was observed in Elementary school teachers' opinions based on their teaching experience. The calculated significance value

of .00 is lower than the tabulated significance level of 0.05, confirming this distinction. Additionally, the F value of 5.06 further supports this finding.

Table 5
Difference between Public Elementary School Teachers' Opinions by Age Group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	636.28	4	159.07	.41	.30
Within Groups	153221.99	396	386.92		
Total	153858.27	400			

Table 5 reveals a statistically insignificant difference in Elementary school teachers' opinions across age groups, with a calculated significance value of 0.30, which is

higher than the tabulated significance level of 0.05. This finding is further supported by an F value of 0.411.

Table 6
Difference between Public Elementary School Teachers' by Professional Qualification

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2529.95	3	843.31	2.21	.04
Within Groups	151328.32	397	381.18		
Total	153858.279	400			

Table 6 reveals a statistically significant difference in the opinions of elementary school teachers based on their professional qualifications, with a calculated significance

value of 0.046, which is below the tabulated significance level of 0.05. This conclusion is further supported by an F value of 2.21.

Table 7
Difference between Public Elementary School Teachers' by Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1092.07	4	273.01	.70	.02
Within Groups	152766.20	396	385.77		
Total	153858.279	400			

Table 7 demonstrates a statistically significant difference in Elementary school teachers' opinions based on their academic qualifications as the calculated significance value of 0.02 is below the threshold of 0.05, supported by an F value of 0.70.

Discussion

The study examined how transformational leadership impacts elementary school climate. It is clear from findings that transformational leadership has impact on school climate. Transformational leadership has been found to significantly influence school climate which is also

supported by the studies of Purves (2013); Velarde, Ghani, Adams, and Cheah (2022) and Asad, Rind and Abdulmuhsin (2022). Further, the study explored that transformational leadership at the elementary level brings about numerous benefits that profoundly impact the school climate. From encouraging innovation and resilience to prioritizing ethical leadership and fostering a sense of community, these leaders create an environment where students thrive, teachers excel, and parents actively engage. Similarly, Fisher (2006) discovered that better Transformational Leadership led to good School Climate. He also discovered a connection between student achievement and the Transformational Leadership. The results of this study are also aligned with the study of Purwanto, Fahmi, and Sulaiman (2023). The study confirms that there exists significant relationship among the transformational leadership behavior and the school climate. In this context, studies of Purwanto et al. (2021); Putra et al. (2020) also explored significant relationship amid the transformational leadership behavior and the learning culture and their findings support the findings of current research.

Recommendations

1. There should have been larger-scale studies in the future, particularly involving the entire division and province as a population.
2. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews, can complement the quantitative findings in the study.
3. Students' perspectives can all be taken into consideration in the following studies.

Conclusion

To conclude, the study highlights the crucial role of transformational leadership in shaping a positive and nurturing school climate at the elementary level. It contributes significantly to the field of educational leadership by emphasizing the importance of leadership practices that inspire and engage stakeholders in the school community. The effect of transformational leadership on the school climate at the elementary level is profound and far-reaching. From inspiring a

shared vision to fostering teacher empowerment, student engagement, and emotional well-being, transformational leaders create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Through their dedication to continuous improvement and parental partnership, they cultivate a legacy of leadership and prepare students to become responsible, empathetic, and lifelong learners. The impact of transformational leadership goes beyond academic excellence, shaping the lives of students, educators, and the entire school community for a brighter and more promising future.

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